

# U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



## SYMBOLISM



Department of  
Defense Seal

**Department of Defense Seal** - The American bald eagle, long associated with symbolism representing the United States of America and its military establishment, has been selected as an emblem of strength. In facing to the right, the field of honor is indicated. The eagle is defending the United States, represented by the Shield of thirteen pieces. The thirteen pieces are joined together by the blue chief, representing the Congress. The rays and stars above the eagle signify glory, while the three arrows are collectively symbolic of the three component parts of the Department of Defense (Army, Navy, Air Force). The laurel stands for honors received in combat defending the peace represented by the olive branch.



Department of the  
Army Seal

**Department of the Army Seal** - The central element of the Department of the Army seal is a Roman cuirass, symbol of strength and defense. The United States Flag and the other flag emphasize the role of the Army in the establishment of and the protection of the Nation. The sword, esparton, musket, bayonet, cannon, cannon balls, mortar, and mortar bombs are representative of traditional Army implements. The drum and drumsticks are symbols of public notification of the Army's purpose and intent to serve the Nation and its people. The Phrygian cap supported on the point of the unsheathed sword and the motto "This We'll Defend" on a scroll held by the rattlesnake is a symbol depicted on some American colonial flags and signified the Army's constant readiness to defend and preserve the United States.



Corps of  
Engineers Seal

**Corps of Engineers Seal** - The significance of the design as commemorating the achievements of both the Corps of Engineers and the Corps of Topographical Engineers is plain to be seen. The larger shield is divided into three horizontal sections, of which the top usually is represented in solid blue color; while the bottom is divided into vertical (red and white) stripes. The center section shows the interesting original shields of the two historic corps; the Dexter shield being a reproduction of the basic device of the Engineers' oldest insignia, the Essayons Button; the Sinister shield showing the Corps of Topographical Engineers red, white, and blue shield between the letters "T" and "E".



The Essayons Button

**The Essayons Button** - The Corps of Engineers' oldest and most time-honored insignia is the exclusive Essayons Button. It has not changed in basic design since its first definitely known use during the War of 1812. It is still the required button for the Army Engineers' uniform. Evidence which could establish the actual facts concerning the designing and adoption of the Essayons Button probably burned at West Point in 1838, when the building containing the library and earliest official Corps and Military Academy records caught fire. However, while early Army regulations mentioned the "button of the Engineers... with only the device and motto heretofore established," apparently no authoritative detailed description of the button appeared until 1840. The Army prescribed new uniforms on February 18, 1840, which officially described the button as follows: "An eagle holding in his beak a scroll with the word 'Essayons,' a bastion with embrasures in the distance, surrounded by water, and rising sun; the figures to be of dead gold upon a bright field. In 1902, when the Army adopted "regulation" button, it allowed only the Corps of Engineers to retain its own distinctive Essayons Button in recognition of the distinguished traditions that it symbolized.



The Corps Castle

**The Corps Castle (traditional)** - The appropriateness of the turreted castle as a symbol of the Corps of Engineers is readily apparent. The medieval castle is inseparably connected with fortification and architecture. In heraldry, the castle and the tower are often used in a coat of arms or given as charges in the shield of persons who reduced them, were the first to mount their walls in an assault, or successfully defended them. In this country the term "castle" has been applied to the strongest of our early fortifications, such as Castle Williams and Castle Clinton in New York Harbor. Possibly patterned after one of the city gates of Verdun, France, the castle is a highly conventionalized form, without decoration or embellishment. The Army officially announced the adoption of the castle, to appear on the Corps of Engineers' uniform epaulets and belt plate, in 1840. Soon afterwards, the cadets at West Point, all of whom were part of the Corps of Engineers until the Military Academy came under the control of the Army-at-large in 1866, also wore the castle. Army regulations first prescribed the use of the castle on the cap in 1841. Subsequently, the castle appeared on the shoulder knot, on saddle cloth as a collar ornament; and on the buttons. Although its design has changed many times, the castle, since its inception has remained the distinctive symbol of the Corps of Engineers.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

Tulsa District

The Corporate  
Logo

**Corporate Logo - Corps Castle** – This is the communications logo for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This design was selected to provide a unified corporate image for all official uses. This design uses the traditional castle as its foundation. This logo is copyrighted and used outside of official Corps of Engineers business must be approved in writing by the Public Affairs Office.



Corps of  
Engineers  
Crest

**Corps of Engineers Crest** - The eagle, our national symbol, stands behind the scarlet and white tower representing the Corps of Engineers and its construction mission. The worldwide scope of the Corps' mission and its service to the nation in the past, present and future are suggested by the sun symbol and globe. The olive branch connotes the peaceful nature of the Corps' mission and the oak stands for fortitude. Also, the branches symbolize the Corps' concern for the environment. The Corps' historic motto, "Essayons," meaning "Let us Try" is held in the eagle's beak.